The Comfort of a Best Friend

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The Comfort of a Best Friend

by LuminousMe

Summary

Alex comes out to Luke.

Notes

Anon asked: would you write a platonic alex & luke & reggie kind of a flashabck of when alex came out to them? because i imagine him being terrified and super nervous and feeling like he's gonna throw up, and the boys being SUPER SOFT with him.

January 1994.

It'd been on his mind for a while now.

It felt like a lie.

Or at least a lie by omission, anyway.

And he was guilty of omission, he knew. He had been subjecting his friends to his presence for months now, when they had no idea what was on his mind.

Each time Luke put a hand to his leg or threw an arm around his shoulders, hugging him close to his chest, Alex softened before his anxiety spiked.

Was he allowed to enjoy this? Was he allowed to find comfort in these familiar touches and comfortable contacts?

Did that comfort equate to attraction – or was it love, even? It was love, yes – Alex loved Luke and Reggie more than anything the world could offer him – but was it an ordinary love shared between close friends?

Or was it a repulsive love? One that was peppered with an unwanted lust; one that had Alex on his knees each night, retching on the bathroom tiles.

How many nights had Alex spent working himself up into that state? It usually began the memory of a single moment: Bobby's soft touch as he painted Alex's fingernails in the same black polish he wore himself, or Luke's playful, teasing smile as he plucked the theme tune to The Adam's Family, or Reggie's bubbly, effervescent laughter.

And Alex began to wonder if these moments were as tender to his friends as they were to him. And this question lead him to the dizzying fear that marched him into the anxious spiral that he lost himself in most nights:

Am I in love with my best friends?

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It was a late evening in January that Alex found himself heading towards Luke's house.
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Alex's breath formed cotton clouds in front of his face as he watched the ground disappear beneath his feet. He counted his steps as he walked: *one, two, three, four; one, two, three, four* … perfect rhythm. That he knew. That he could work with.

What was he doing?

Not much later on, he found himself knocking on the front door of the Patterson's house. Luke's mother answered.

"Alex?" she said, holding the door. She was smiling at him, but the warm, comforting tone of her voice was laced with concern. She looked the boy up and down. He was wearing just his pink hoodie and a pair of black jeans, his hands buried deep inside his front pocket. "Honey, what are you doing here? Are you alright?"

No.

"Hi, Mrs. Patterson. Sorry. I know it's late. Is Luke here?"

The woman opened her mouth, but before she could even formulate an answer, Luke, himself, appeared at her elbow. "Alex, hey," he said, a curious half smile on his face. "What are you doing here?" His brows began to wrinkle. "Everything okay?"

Alex stalled. He blinked. "Oh, yeah. Yeah, I'm all good. I was just out for a walk and…" He leant back, casting an eye over the neighbourhood. "I was just passing and thought I'd drop by."

Luke narrowed his eyes, his lips parting. "Sure…" he said, though seemed unconvinced. "Did you want to come in?"

Alex considered the invite, but shook his head. "No, I just…"

Back out. Abort. Don't do it.

Go home.

He snapped his head up. "You wanna come walk with me for a bit?"

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Luke had shared only a brief look with his mother before he'd grabbed his jacket and waved them onwards.

They meandered together, side-by-side, heading nowhere in particular but silently avoiding the main streets. Alex was grateful for that.
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“So, I spoke to the manager of Duke’s by the way,” Luke had begun. “He said that Sunset Curve could totally maybe play in their new music night next month. Maybe March. He was… you know, he was kind of unsure. He didn’t want to commit, but I’m telling you, dude, Duke’s is not a write off this time. Not like The Green Court, those bastards…”

Alex wasn’t really listening. All he could hear were his ruminations - thoughts that knocked back and forth like a metronome.

Tell him, tell him, tell him.

“What do you think? You think Duke’s is going to happen? If not, I think we should just show up anyway. Show the line outside that we’re better than whatever crap they decided to put on instead of us. Huh? What do you think?”

“Yeah, sounds cool man. I dig it.”

Tell him, tell him, tell him.

He realised he’d started counting to the beat of his anxieties: *one, two; one, two,* and his feet obeyed.

Suddenly, Alex realised Luke was no longer by his side. Alex slowed to a stop and turned to see Luke standing no less than four paces back, arms hanging limply by his sides.

“We’ve been out here for, like, half an hour, Alex, and I don’t think it’s because you want to talk about Duke’s. When are you going to tell me what’s up?”

Alex dropped his head and swallowed. Luke took two steps to fill the gap between them.

“Come on, man, you don’t think I’ve noticed?” Luke asked. “You’ve been totally out of whack, recently. You’re missing beats you could hit in your sleep. And I know you do, too, because whenever we share a bed, you end up leaving bruises on my back. I’m worried about you, man.”

Alex winced. He got caught on the part about them sharing a bed. Oh *god.* He was going to throw up.

He closed his eyes. “Don’t say that.”

Luke recoiled. “What? Don’t say what?”

“Just… please don’t. Don’t.”

“Alex, what are you talking about?” Luke asked. “Alex, talk to me.” He took another step forward, further closing the gap between them, causing Alex to thrust out a hand and parry backwards.

“No,” he said, keeping his hand between them. “No, just don’t… don’t come any…” he swallowed as Luke’s eyes grew wide. His hand ducked back into his pocket. “Don’t say you’re worried about me.”

A bloated silence filled the space between them.

Finally, Luke’s nostrils flared. “What? I *am* worried about you. Alex, you’re my best friend and you’ve been acting totally weird since… well, for a while now. I don’t know what’s up with you. You’re not telling me something and I’m worried about it.”

Luke folded his arms to bar against the sudden cold wind that cut through them. As the wind speared the overcast clouds, Alex noticed Luke’s eyes and cheeks were damp in the moonlight.

“You’re my best friend, Alex, how can you say I shouldn’t be worried?”

Alex's face stung in the cold. He tipped his head back.

“ *Please,* Alex.”

He exhaled a shuddering breath. “I’m so scared.”

Luke’s eyebrows turned down. “Scared? What… what is it? What are you scared of? If you tell me, I can help you. We’ll work it out. Trust me, damn it.”

Alex dropped his head forward, his cheeks damp too, now. He chewed on his bottom lip and lifted his shoulders in a small shrug. “I’m scared of losing you,” he said, and Luke’s chin jutted out. “And Reggie and Bobby. All of you.”

“ *Lose us* ?” Luke repeated, indignant. “That’s crazy. Why would you lose us? Alex, please. What is going on with you, just tell me, *please* . I don’t know what you’re–”

Alex closed his eyes, took a deep breath and let the words fall out.

The moment following his utterance, Alex felt a sudden peace wash over him. The words were out. They were in somebody else's hands now. He could finally deal with the consequences. He was still afraid of what they may be, but felt stronger for it.

Luke blinked, frowning. "You're what?"

And the strength dissipated.

Alex stared at his friend. He didn't want to repeat himself, but he swallowed his nerve and hunched his shoulders. "I'm gay."

Luke's face relaxed, a neutral shock settling over his features. His mouth formed a small 'o' as thoughts and memories played over his face.

Suddenly the panic was back and Alex felt his heart rate begin to race. *Thump. Thump. Thump.*

One, one, one.

Overwhelmed and overbalanced with it all, Alex stumbled back and pushed his hands through his hair. He tugged on fistfulls of blonde.

Luke just continued to look blankly at the ground.

Alex shook his head, wishing the whole moment away. If only he had waited just another day – had had just a few more days to spend time with his best friends. If he had known that earlier that day he would be led by his feet to Luke's front door, he would've made sure to take note of every detail of the scene.

Catalogue every note of Reggie's laughter, every melody that Luke smiled, and each chord Bobby moved through.

"I'm sorry, Luke, I'm so sorry. I should've told you sooner. I'm sorry."

You stupid fool. What have you done?

The blankness on Luke's face was replaced with confusion. "Wait, what?"

"I know… I know it's totally gross and I get it if you never want to talk to me again or–"

And then Alex felt Luke's arms around him and for a fearful moment he thought he might be thrown to the ground. He went rigid, bracing

for the impact of the suburban sidewalk.

It never came. Instead, Luke just held him there, on his feet, with a hand on the back of his head, calloused fingers stroking his hair.

Alex dropped his arms around Luke's shoulders and the boy let out a deep sigh and Alex felt hot breath on his neck. He felt dampness against his skin.

"Luke?"

"Yeah, I'm okay." Luke sniffed and Alex realised he was no longer the only one crying.

"Did you hear what I said?"

Luke nodded. He pulled back, placing his hands on Alex's cheeks. He nodded again and let out a choked laugh as he said, "I heard you."

Alex reached up and rested his fingers on Luke's hand. He swallowed and choked. "I'm gay, Luke. I tried not to be, but I just…"

Luke shook his head. "Hey, hey."

Alex pressed his lips together.

"You're the drummer of the sickest new rock band this side of the hollywood strip, *and* you're my best friend, okay? You don't have to pretend to be anything you're not."

Luke dropped one hand to his shoulder and squeezed. "I don't care what you are, man. I don't care. As long as I get to keep calling you my best friend, my drummer, my brother, you can be a fucking giraffe for all I care."

"A giraffe?" Alex snorted softly.

Luke grinned. "If you wanted to be. I'd support it."

"You really… you really don't care?"

Luke's grin faded. "No man, why would I?"

Alex's lungs gave way to relief. He gripped the hand that Luke had left on his cheek and allowed a few breathy laughs to pass his lips as he attempted not to collapse.

“I really thought I was going to lose you.”

Luke shook his head. “You goof.”

They stood for a long while, Luke brushing tears from Alex’s face and Alex telling Luke to stop being so gay. They laughed and Luke shoved him.

“Dude,” he said, mouth curved in a playful smile.

“I’m allowed,” Alex said, pushing his hands back in his pockets.

Luke rolled his eyes and shoved Alex again, this time back in the direction they came. “Come on, let’s go back to mine and get pizza. It’s fucking cold out here.”

Alex exhaled, his stomach unclenching for the first time in many months. “Okay,” he said. “That sounds good.”

And even though it was cold and his feet were numb and his legs felt weak, he felt happy. And when they reached the Patterson’s house, Luke’s mom made hot chocolate for them.

They took their mugs to Luke’s room and Luke put a VHS tape into the player - “ *Ferris Bueller’s Day Off* , a classic, of course,” he’d said, before climbing onto the bed, and shuffling close to Alex.

The two relaxed into each other, Alex’s head on Luke’s shoulder, and Luke’s leg propped up and hooked over Alex’s, and Alex finally felt comfortable again in the familiar and loving touches of his best friend.

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